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MEDIA ADVISORY
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 22, 2004

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ANNOUNCEMENT

**National Park Service announces public meetings for
New River Wild and Scenic River Study**

The National Park Service announced today that public events will be held on July 12th in Hinton, West Virginia, and July 13th, 2004 in Rich Creek, Virginia, to discuss future management of a section of the New River in Virginia and West Virginia that is currently under study for possible inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. These upcoming public events will provide area residents an opportunity to learn more about potential scenarios for future management and possible implications of Wild and Scenic River designation, to share ideas about river issues and opportunities, and to express opinions about how the river and lands along the river should be managed in the future.

The ***Memorial Building auditorium*** in ***Hinton, WV*** (located at corner of Park and James Streets) will be the site of a public open house and meeting on Monday, ***July 12th, 2004***. During the open house (from 4:00 to 5:00 pm, and from 6:00 – 7:00 pm), the study team and agency participants will be available in an informal setting to share information about the project. After the open house, a public meeting will be held from ***7:00 to 8:30***. During the meeting, the study team will make a brief presentation focusing on potential scenarios for future management of the river, and the remainder of the time will be devoted to discussion and answering questions. In addition, the study team will be in ***Rich Creek, VA*** at the ***Rich Creek Community Center*** (corner of Spruce and North Streets) on Tuesday, ***July 13, 2004*** for an open house from ***4:00 to 5:00 pm and 6:00 to 7:00 pm***, followed by a public meeting from ***7:00 to 8:30 pm***..

The Upper New River Wild and Scenic River Study was authorized by Congress to determine whether a 20-mile section of the New River straddling the Virginia/West Virginia border should

be added to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. The study is looking at the New River from the Route 460 bridge in Glen Lyn, Virginia, downstream to Bluestone Lake, near Hinton, West Virginia, and the surrounding area. In West Virginia, lands in the study area are currently administered by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (as part of the project area for the Bluestone Dam) and are managed by the State's Division of Natural Resources as part of the Bluestone Wildlife Management Area. The National Park Service's Northeast Regional Office in Philadelphia was assigned responsibility to conduct the study, and is working in close consultation with the Army Corps, the two states, adjacent communities and counties, users of the area, and other key stakeholders.

The current phase of the study involves looking at options for how the river might best be managed in the future, what the effects of Wild and Scenic River designation or some other management approach might be, and whether there is support for designation among key river interests, including local communities, state and federal agencies, and nongovernmental organizations. In other words, this part of the study involves evaluating whether Wild and Scenic River designation makes sense for the area, or whether some other approach would be more appropriate (including continuing the current arrangement).

At the conclusion of the study a report will be prepared for the U.S. Congress. A draft version of the study report is tentatively scheduled to be released for public review in fall 2004. Area residents will have opportunities to comment in person and in writing on the study report before it is finalized and forwarded to the Congress. The Congress will make the final decision regarding whether or not the river should be designated and, if so, how it will be managed.